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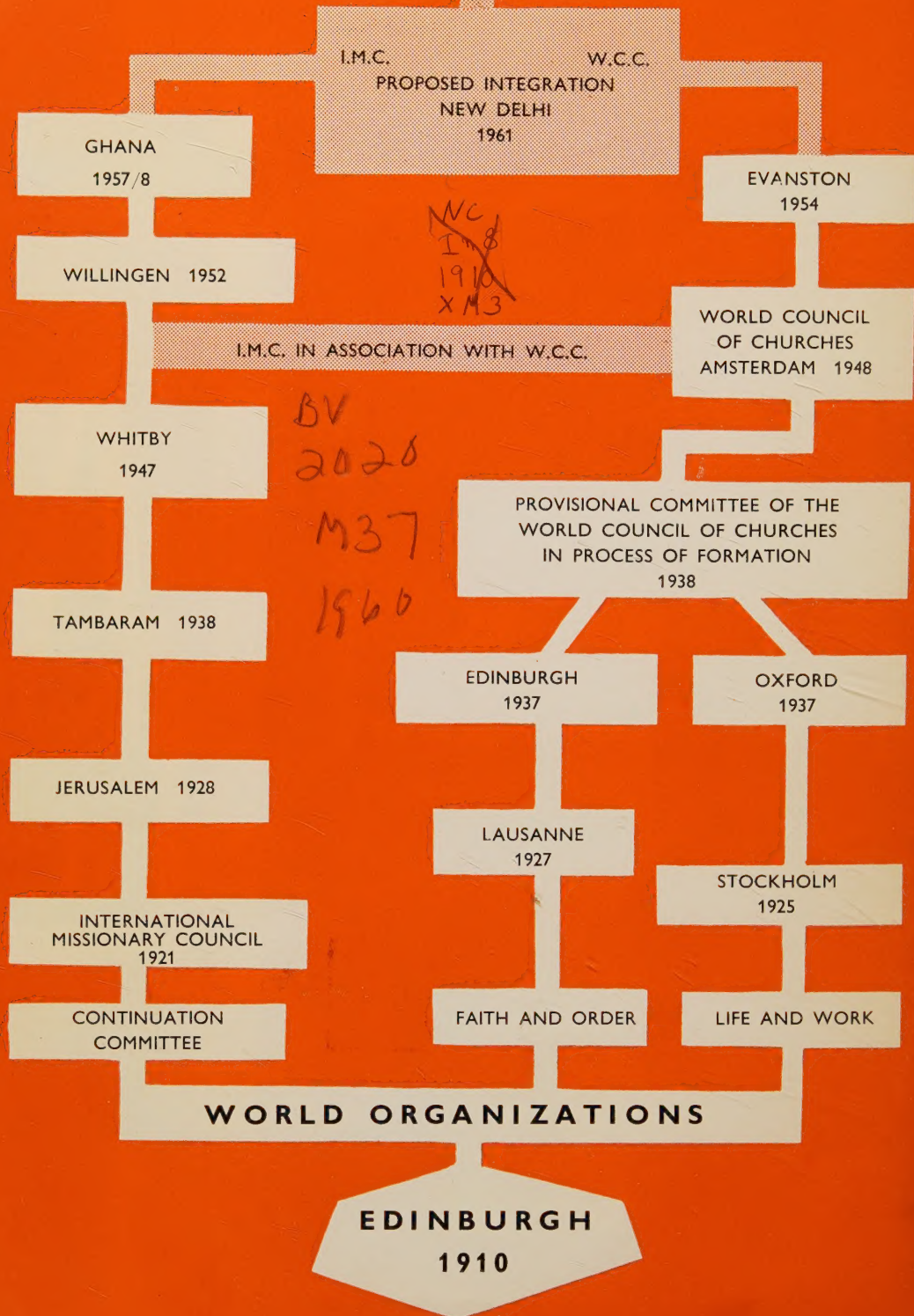
*A Jubilee Assessment of
the World Missionary Conference
1910*

by **HUGH MARTIN**



at Edinburgh . . .



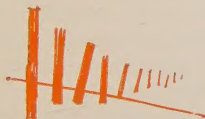


BEGINNING AT EDINBURGH . . .



Verdict

BY the general consent of all competent judges the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in June, 1910, was one of the most creative events in the long history of the Christian Church. Its significance is all the more clear in the perspective of fifty years after. In many respects unique in itself, it was also unique in the impetus it gave to Christian activity in many directions. It opened a new era in the missionary enterprise, but it was also the beginning of what we now call 'the ecumenical movement'. 'Edinburgh, 1910' was in fact a fountain head of international and inter-Church co-operation on a depth and scale never before known.



Forerunners

BUT, to bring in yet another metaphor, Edinburgh was no Melchizedek 'without father or mother or genealogy' (Hebrews 7, 3. R.S.V.). Edinburgh itself had its beginnings. To tell the full story one would need to go back at least as far as the amazing missionary outreach of the early Church, 'beginning at Jerusalem' to bear witness of God's love in Christ to the uttermost parts of the then-known world. Since then the Church has always had its restless missionaries, pressing out to the wild tribes of Northern Europe, even to the savage British islanders, to the far East and to the far West.

With the founding of the great missionary societies at the end of the eighteenth century we come closer to our present story. One of the chief figures in that remarkable awakening of the Churches, William Carey, had the vision from the start of a co-operative missionary enterprise. He saw, with regret, that as things were the work must be undertaken by denominational organizations, such as the Baptist Missionary Society, which he helped to found. But when he started Serampore College, he made provision for others than Baptists to be on its governing body and, more remarkable still, he wanted to see regular consultations between the missionaries of all the Churches. In a letter in 1806 he proposed the holding of a conference 'once in about ten years' at the Cape of Good Hope, between the missionaries 'of all denominations of Christians, from the four quarters of the world'. But in this, as in many of his ideas, Carey was far in advance of his time and he got little encouragement. His friends at home dismissed it as 'one of Carey's pleasing dreams'.

International missionary gatherings were indeed held during the nineteenth century, but not on a scale or with an inclusiveness to match Carey's proposal.

The most notable was held in New York in 1900, and was actually called the Ecumenical Missionary Conference, 'because the plan of campaign which it proposes covers the whole area of the inhabited globe'. But like its four predecessors it was merely a series of inspirational meetings, open to all who cared to come, and representative of only one wing of the missionary enterprise. Not until a century after the date he had suggested (1810) did anything like Carey's plan come to fruition.



Preparations

It had been intended to continue the series of conferences and Edinburgh had been selected as the next meeting place. A small committee representing certain British missionary societies, with a preponderance of Scots, had been entrusted with the arrangements. At a meeting in 1906 they came to the conclusion that another demonstration would not justify the cost in time and money, and proposed instead a carefully prepared consultative conference confined to representative missionary leaders. Correspondence with America and Europe revealed general agreement, and it was decided to transfer responsibility to an international committee. In 1908 a four-day meeting was held in Oxford with ten members from British societies, three from the continent of Europe, and five from North America. To the careful and farsighted planning of this committee is due much of the effectiveness of Edinburgh.

They decided to appoint eight commissions to prepare reports, and to make these reports the basis of the conference. The subjects chosen were: (1) Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World; (2) The Church in the Mission Field; (3) Education in Relation to the Christianisation of National Life; (4) The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions; (5) The Preparation of Missionaries; (6) The Home Base of Missions; (7) Missions and Governments; (8) Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity. They appointed international and interdenominational groups, with closely co-operating sections on both sides of the Atlantic. Remarkable success was achieved in enlisting for these the devoted labours of scholars, missionaries and laymen of distinguished ability. Correspondents all over the world replied, often at great length, to questions put to them, more than a thousand replies being received. Reports were drafted, circulated, discussed, revised, and after heroic efforts the finished articles, the result of two years' work, were sent to the delegates weeks before the conference met. They made an impressive library of eight red cloth-bound volumes, packed with solid, but surprisingly readable matter, of two to three hundred pages each.

The second momentous decision of the committee was the appointment of the secretary and chairman of the conference. For the first post they chose a young secretary of the Student Christian Movement, J. H. Oldham, a man of thirty-four. As chairman they selected another Y.M.C.A. and S.C.M. man, John R. Mott, aged forty-three. In the choice of these two the committee showed remarkable and, one cannot doubt, divinely inspired insight. It would be hard indeed

to exaggerate what the conference and all that came out of it owed to their great and complementary gifts of administration and leadership. Mott was then secretary of the World's Student Christian Federation, and chairman of the American Student Volunteer Movement. He had already been twice round the world, a foretaste of missionary travels without precedent. He was a Methodist layman. Oldham was a member of the United Free Church of Scotland and had served with the Y.M.C.A. in India before joining the staff of the British S.C.M. Here was a pair of men with faith, vision and skill, 'practical mystics'.

But a third fundamental task of preparation remained, the need to ensure that the commissions and the conference were really representative of the Christian missionary enterprise as a whole, with the inevitable exception of the Roman Catholic Church. Previous conferences had been 'evangelical' in constitution, and it is fair to say that Evangelical suspicion of the High Churchmen—or Anglo-Catholics—was only to be matched by the suspicions felt by the Anglo-Catholics of Evangelicals! They had no dealings with one another. The committee appointed in 1900 had only one Anglican on it, Prebendary H. E. Fox of the Church Missionary Society, the others belonging to the Church of Scotland or the English Free Churches.

The key to the situation seemed to lie in Britain. Happily the S.C.M., which included many Evangelicals, had won the confidence of some outstanding Anglo-Catholics also, and Oldham and Tatlow, the S.C.M. General Secretary, by the exercise of much tact and patience secured the promise of participation in the conference from Dr. Armitage Robinson, the Dean of Westminster, Bishop Edward Talbot of Winchester, Father Frere, Superior of the Community of the Resurrection, and Bishop Gore of Birmingham. And the Archbishop of Canterbury agreed to speak at the opening meeting. 'We would not have been here,' said Bishop Talbot to a group at Edinburgh, '... had it not been for the Student Christian Movement.'

Three decisions regarding the nature and scope of the conference were involved in the co-operation of the Anglo-Catholics. Latin America was regarded by them as a Roman Catholic land, and any Protestant work there as mere proselytizing. They insisted on its omission from the programme. This naturally caused much heart-burning among the Evangelicals, who thought much of the Roman Catholicism was very nominal, while a great part of the population was purely pagan.

It was also agreed that matters of doctrine and church polity should be excluded from consideration, mainly on the ground that they were the business of the Churches themselves.

A further understanding was that the conference should be on an inter-denominational basis. Previous ones had been *undenominational*, based on ignoring and 'hushing up' differences and concentrating solely on points of agreement. During its twenty years of life the S.C.M. had worked out a different principle, by which co-operation between Christians of different traditions meant that they brought their very differences as positive contributions to the common stock. It is the standpoint later stated in unforgettable words in the famous Lambeth 'Appeal to All Christian People' of 1920: 'The vision which rises before us is that of a Church, genuinely Catholic, loyal to all Truth, and gathering into its fellowship all "who profess and call themselves Christians," within whose visible unity all the treasures of faith and order, bequeathed as a heritage by the

past to the present, shall be possessed in common, and made serviceable to the whole body of Christ. Within this unity Christian Communions now separated from one another would retain much that has long been distinctive in their methods of worship and service. It is through a rich diversity of life and devotion that the unity of the whole fellowship will be fulfilled.'

Much of this sounds rather commonplace today, but it was revolutionary in 1908. Writing some years after in *The Student Movement* William Temple said: 'Members of the Movement ought to know that without their movement there could never have been held the Edinburgh Conference, which was the greatest event in the life of the Church for a generation.' Not the least important achievement of Edinburgh was its representative character, and the fellowship begun there has borne rich fruit, not only in missionary affairs but much more widely. Behind the conference lay an immense amount of sheer hard work.



At the Conference

ON June 14, 1910, the World Missionary Conference assembled for ten days of intensive discussions. There were 1,355 delegates: 560 represented forty-six missionary societies in the British Isles; 594 represented sixty societies in the United States and Canada; 175 came from European missionary societies; and twenty-six from twelve societies in Australasia. Places had been allocated on the basis of the society incomes. Less than a score came from what we later came to call 'the younger Churches', and they were there as part of the missionary society delegations, but few though they were in numbers they were outstanding in quality and prophetically significant of the shape of things to come. Two or three thousand visitors attended parallel meetings addressed by members of the conference. A fortunate few, among them the present writer, had access to the galleries of the Assembly Hall while the conference was in session. Then the Assembly Hall of the United Free Church of Scotland, it was to become before many years were over the Assembly Hall of a happily reunited Church of Scotland.

In sharp contrast to most gatherings of the kind, and certainly to all its predecessors, less than one fifth of the time was spent in hearing addresses or papers, which were confined to the evening sessions. This was to be an occasion for consultation and joint planning, though without any power of legislation, by a group of unique knowledge and authority on all missionary questions. The mornings and afternoons were devoted to open discussions on the reports in the hands of the delegates. The speeches were strictly limited to seven minutes. Notices were reduced to vanishing point by the device of a daily bulletin, delivered every morning through the post to each delegate at his breakfast table.

Oldham never opened his lips at all except for the rarest of announcements, yet, with great understanding, the whole conference applauded loudly and at length the first time he rose. They were men who knew what organizing meant and they wanted to pay their tribute.

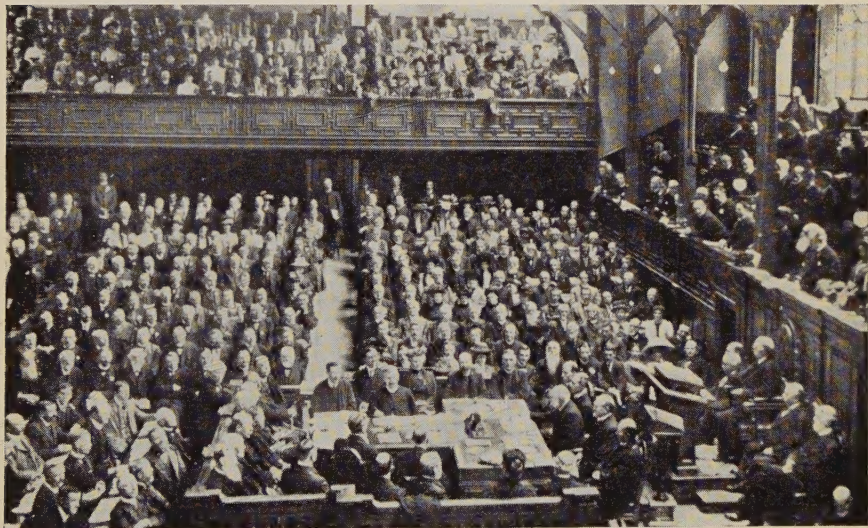
A conference conducted on such novel lines demanded unusual gifts of chairmanship, and they were forthcoming. Then a comparatively unknown younger

man, Mott had to control an international assembly of archbishops and bishops, peers and scholars, university principals and missionary administrators, all accustomed to be listened to with deference and to getting their own way. Those wishing to speak filled in cards giving their names and the particular point in the report to which they would address themselves. The cards were passed to the chair by the stewards, and Mott kept arranging and rearranging them as the discussion proceeded to ensure that all points of view were presented in due order. When a speaker was called the name of the one to follow was also given, so that he might appear on the rostrum without delay. The greatest got only his seven minutes, and many would-be speakers could not be called at all.

Mott controlled the conference with a firmness that never seemed autocratic, with a humour that dissolved tense situations, and with a depth of sincerity and spiritual power that somehow impressed itself upon everyone. A large-built man, he had a commanding presence, with a strong square face and big shaggy eyebrows: it is said that when Orpen painted his portrait years later he began with the eyebrows! Mott could be formidable on occasion, but to those who had his friendship he was the most human and kindly of men.

In *The Methodist Recorder* (July 14, 1910) the Rev. W. H. Findlay, a distinguished Methodist missionary from India, wrote, 'At Edinburgh a time keeper, somewhere out of view, struck a bell audible to speaker and Chairman, and audience, when six minutes had gone. This let the speaker know that he had one minute left— . . . On the stroke of the seventh minute the bell sounded again. In some cases the speech had been so carefully calculated that its last words coincided with the stroke. Many speakers had such sense of discipline that they broke off in the middle of a sentence when the knell sounded; Bishop Gore, for

By courtesy of the Basel Mission



THE WORLD MISSIONARY CONFERENCE, EDINBURGH, 1910

instance, left an important sentiment half uttered and fled the platform with the activity of a schoolboy. But in any case Dr. Mott quietly rose when the seven minutes bell struck, and if the speaker at his elbow was still pursuing his way, he turned expectantly toward him. It was impossible for the speaker to be unconscious of the motion, or to refrain from turning to look at the standing and waiting Chairman. The moment he looked, Dr. Mott made a quiet bow, which said most eloquently, "I should rejoice to hear you further, brother; but we are both under the authority of the bell, so we must part. Goodbye!" What speaker could either resist or resent the closure, administered with firm courtesy?

Nobody at the time attached any importance to the choice of the ubiquitous stewards who had been chosen by the S.C.M. from among its then leaders in the universities. They did the chores of the conference, but they also looked and listened, and the impression lasted a lifetime. Many of them became in later years outstanding leaders in the ecumenical movement. There was, for example, a young Oxford man who was thought to show considerable promise; his name was William Temple. Among the others were Neville Talbot, H. G. Wood, K. E. Kirk, John Baillie, John McLeod Campbell, Walter Moberly.

For the opening meeting the chair was taken by the President, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, the bearer of an historic name, well known both as a churchman and as a politician, a former Cabinet Minister. The other speakers were Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, who, though no orator, deeply moved his hearers, and Robert E. Speer, the great American missionary leader and a speaker of quite exceptional gifts. 'No one,' he declared, can follow Christ 'without following Him to the uttermost parts of the earth!' 'If men be weighed rather than counted,' said the Archbishop, a man of sober words and cautious judgments, this conference 'has, I suppose, no parallel in the history of this or of other lands.' 'The place of missions in the life of the Church must be the central place, and none other . . .'

In the midst of each morning session, deliberately at the time when delegates would be at their best, the discussion was suspended that half an hour might be given to prayer, 'our great central act of worship' as the chairman called it.

Only a brief glance can be given to the course of the discussions and, in any case, the progress of events and the developments which Edinburgh itself brought about, have made much of what even Edinburgh said curiously old-fashioned and out of date.

Mott himself, leaving the chair for the purpose, presented the report of Commission I, of which he had been chairman, on carrying the Gospel to the world. The report was a world survey of problems and prospects. Six conclusions, he declared, had been borne in upon the commission during its two years of work. First, the vastness and infinite difficulty of the task. Second, the need for the Church to bestir itself as never before in an hour of unprecedented opportunity. Third, the call to enter unoccupied fields. Fourth, if this world situation was to be met there must be united planning and concerted effort. His statement that a well considered plan of co-operation would be more than equivalent to doubling the present missionary staff called forth loud applause. The commission hoped that a permanent representative international committee would be set up as a result of the conference. More applause! Fifth, this is 'not chiefly a European and American enterprise, but an Asiatic or African enterprise' by 'an army of

well-qualified native evangelists and leaders'. It is the very success of missionary work in bringing into being national Churches in Africa and the East that makes such a way of putting it now seem rather odd. All the conference could do in 1910 was to greet the beginnings of evangelistically minded 'native churches' in several of the mission fields and their growing spirit of independence. His last point was that 'the most crucial problem in relation to evangelising the world is the state of the Church in the Christian countries.'

The report and discussion on 'the Church in the Mission Field' again reveal how greatly the situation in many lands has changed. 'The Church on which we report presents itself no longer as an inspiring but distant ideal, nor even as a tender plant or a young child, appealing to our compassion and nurturing care. We see it now an actual Church in being, strongly rooted, and fruitful in many lands. The child has, in many places, reached, and in others is fast reaching maturity, and is now both fitted and willing, perhaps in a few cases too eager, to take upon itself its full burden of responsibility and service.' It was on this report that V. S. Azariah from South India, one day to become the first Indian Anglican bishop, made a courageous speech which disturbed and distressed many of his hearers. His own relations with Western missionaries, he said, had been 'simply delightful' but he was sure, speaking generally, that there was need for a deep readjustment of personal relationships. What was wanted was friendship. 'Through all the ages to come the Indian Church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labours of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for *love*. Give us FRIENDS !'

In presenting the report on education Prof. Moore of Harvard said that it marked an epoch. 'It is the beginning of a serious endeavour to arrive by joint consultation at a policy.' The report contained a survey of the relation of Christian truth to indigenous thought, and chapters on literature, industrial training, and the training of teachers.

The report on the missionary message, generally regarded as the most masterly of them all, was presented by Prof. D. S. Cairns of Aberdeen. It discussed the non-Christian religions one by one and what Christianity had to say to them.

On missions and governments there was a review of the bewildering variety of all shades of toleration and opposition shown to missionary work by the ruling powers. Strong speeches, with strong support behind them in the conference generally, dealt with instances of oppression and misgovernment, such as forced labour on the Congo, and the degrading traffics in gin and opium.

Then the conference came to the debate which, surprisingly enough, showed the strongest feeling, and certainly led to lasting results. The case for a permanent representative body had been piling up. The first commission declared that their

By courtesy of the S.C.M. Press



JOHN R. MOTT

task of collecting the facts was not completed, and that in any case the stupendous undertaking of world evangelization must be impossible without far more co-operation. Machinery for co-ordinating educational policy was needed. The comparative study of religions must be taken much further. There must be a body entitled to speak to governments on behalf of the missionary societies as a whole. Now came the report on co-operation and the promotion of unity.

First there was a series of speeches on co-operation as actually in practice on the mission field, in one of which Cheng Ching-yi produced seven arguments in his seven minutes to prove the need for a united Church in China. Then the chairman of the commission, Sir Andrew Fraser, lately Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, moved the momentous resolution for the establishment of a Continuation Committee to carry on the work the conference had begun. It was the only resolution put before the conference. This apparently modest proposal was in fact revolutionary. It had to be made plain that the committee would be advisory only and would not seek in any way to control, and that matters of doctrinal or ecclesiastical dispute were to be outside its scope. It must be remembered that such a conference as was then in session was something quite new. Men were sitting together, as fellow members, who had been more accustomed to aim polemic shafts at one another from a distance. Co-operation with the like-minded in theological outlook was not unknown: to work together with those from whom one differed determinedly on many issues was quite another matter. Speakers got up to say that such a step would have been impossible ten or even five years earlier.

More than one expressed the hope that the day might come when they could meet to face those very issues of doctrine which had been ruled out at Edinburgh,



J. H. OLDHAM

‘seeking the guidance of the Spirit of Christ to lead us into the larger and fuller truth which comprehends the different opinions’, as Wardlaw Thompson of the London Missionary Society put it. Nevertheless contradictory views as to the nature of the unity to be sought were voiced by different speakers.

So this, to us, simple and obvious resolution was debated in an atmosphere of excitement as by those making up their minds to engage in a hazardous adventure. The question was put. ‘Those in favour of it say Aye!’ There was a roar from the conference. ‘Those to the contrary say No.’ A dead silence! ‘I declare the motion carried unanimously.’ And the delegates spontaneously broke into the Doxology. If they had known what would flow from that decision, they would have sung it with even more fervour, had that been possible.

The last meeting came, and Mott rose to address it. He began with memorable often-quoted words: ‘The end of the Conference is the beginning of the Conquest. The end of the Planning is the beginning of the Doing.’ Mott as a speaker had no flowing eloquence, no oratorical tricks. Every sentence was delivered almost staccato, with a punch behind it. It was straight talk, calculated to impress even

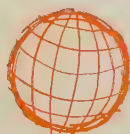
those who started with prejudice against its message. This time it was an urgent call to action in Christ's cause. Dr. Smellie, a prominent Scottish churchman, said the speech reminded him of Oliver Cromwell's way of putting things, as in his letter from Huntingdon in August, 1643, to the Commissioners at Cambridge: 'It's no longer disputing, but out instantly all you can. Raise all your bands; . . . get up what volunteers you can; hasten your horses. . . . I beseech you spare not, but be expeditious and industrious. . . . You must act lively; do it without distraction. Neglect no means.'



Whither Away?

It is obviously impossible to attempt to retell the story of the ecumenical movement over the last fifty years. What we are interested in is to see how much of it got a new impetus from Edinburgh, and to sketch in enough of the story to suggest the direction in which we seem to be travelling.

The immediate result was a co-ordination and enlivening of the missionary movement. Almost immediately, largely through the initiative of one man, the Churches began to consider seriously the dividing barriers of 'faith and order'. The long established Christian social movement was encouraged to go ahead and find international expression. The famous 'Copec' conference in this country modelled itself in many ways upon Edinburgh, and prepared the way for the Stockholm conference at which the Life and Work movement took shape. Later, Faith and Order and Life and Work recognized that they belonged together and joined to create the World Council of Churches. In both the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches, during years of work in close 'association', an irresistible tendency towards their 'integration' has been growing in strength, the end of which is not yet. In a very real sense all this began at Edinburgh.



Into all the World :

The International Missionary Council

If the preparation made Edinburgh of unique value, so even more did the 'follow-up'. The one decision taken was to appoint a Continuation Committee of some forty of its members, with, let this be noted, a full-time executive staff. To us there is nothing strange in the existence of interdenominational organizations employing secretaries. But as Oldham himself has written, what is now a commonplace was then 'a wholly new venture and many of the most trusted leaders of the Churches who were present at the conference felt great hesitation.' It was the first time such a representative international, interdenominational organization had been created.

Under pressure from varied groups in the conference, such as the Germans and the Anglo-Catholics, Oldham agreed to become secretary of the Continuation Committee and was released by the S.C.M. Mott was under similar pressure to



become chairman. It was a striking tribute to the confidence they had both won. Mott's apostolic travels back and forth across the world paid rich dividends. He made an amazing range of colleagues and friends who trusted him to the full in many national and ecclesiastical settings—not least among the Orthodox. And with all this he was a Christian strategist on a world scale with an uncanny ability for getting at the heart of a situation and stimulating appropriate action.

In less spectacular but no less creative ways, Oldham also showed powers as a strategist, applying a keen mind with intense concentration to one problem after another. He too had a gift for inspiring confidence in men of very different antecedents and enlisting their co-operation. Oldham has left his mark for good in many fields, not the least being that in 1912 he made it one of his first tasks to launch *The International Review of Missions* as a high-grade journal of missionary thinking.

While continuing as secretary of the W.S.C.F. Mott gave time from October 1912, to May 1913, to the holding of twenty-one conferences in India, Ceylon, China, Korea and Japan, bringing about the creation of national or regional committees. Out of these came ultimately national Christian councils, with an increasing proportion of nationals alongside the missionaries. Within ten years after Edinburgh, and as a result of it, there was a network of interdenominational councils in more than a score of countries. When Edinburgh met there were only two, the *Ausschuss* of Germany, founded in 1885, and the Annual Conference of Mission Boards of the United States and Canada, founded in 1893. It was not until 1912 that the Conference of British Missionary Societies was formally constituted, although a 'Standing Committee' was appointed in 1911.

The outbreak of the First World War inevitably stopped many of the activities of the Continuation Committee, but an emergency committee did invaluable service in safeguarding missionary interests, including the great 'orphaned missions' operation, by which missions cut off from their home base were enabled to carry on. The effects of the war in this field were most serious, but if, in the providence of God, Edinburgh had not first met and left this continuing organ behind, they would have been disastrous in the extreme. It is impossible to convey to those who did not live through it, the devastating shock of the declaration of war in 1914 in a world that very many Christians, perhaps most, held to have been steadily and inevitably progressing towards the Kingdom of God. Indicative of the unexpectedness of it is the fact that there was no apparent awareness of this threat at Edinburgh or in its reports, or of the revolutionary changes in race relations and in society generally which it was to usher in.

Soon after the war ended the Continuation Committee was able to resume its work, and in 1921 the International Missionary Council was constituted with sixty-one representatives from fourteen countries, the members being national Christian councils or conferences of missionary societies, not Churches. It established offices at Edinburgh House in London, and in New York. The progress of its work has been marked and forwarded by its series of world conferences. Jerusalem, 1928 was largely concerned with the menace of secularism and was a meeting on more equal terms than Edinburgh of representatives of the older and younger Churches, as it taught us to call them, and the delegates from the East and Africa had a great influence on its findings. Tambaram, 1938, a conference held in India, near Madras, was devoted to a study of the place of the younger

Churches in the Church as a whole, and of Christianity in relation to the other religions. Other conferences have followed. No longer is the 'Christian West' 'lighted with wisdom from on high' carrying the Gospel to 'men benighted'. We have realized that heathenism, the savage as well as the cultured kind, is to be found in West as well as East. Now the Churches of the West, stronger in size and resources, are helping the weaker Churches of other lands in a common enterprise, and finding gifts of the spirit coming back in rich measure from Africa and the East. The way things have been moving is shown by the fact that at Edinburgh there were only seventeen from the younger Churches, at Jerusalem they made up one third of the total, and at Tambaram they equalled the missionaries. Of its other conferences and multifarious beneficent activities there is no room to write.



That They All May Be One: Faith and Order

ONE of the delegates at Edinburgh was an ardent Anglo-Catholic from America, Bishop Brent of the Philippines. He heard there the call to become an apostle of Christian unity. In his own words: 'I was converted. I learned that something was working that was not of man in that conference, that the Spirit of God . . . was preparing a new era in the history of Christianity.' In October, 1910, he addressed the General Convention of the Episcopal Church at Cincinnati. He told them about Edinburgh, about the desperate need for Christian unity it revealed, and of his conviction that the decision to ignore doctrinal issues was mistaken. On his suggestion a committee was appointed to promote the calling of a world conference on Faith and Order. He wanted to see more than co-operation. His aim was one world-wide Christian fellowship making available to its members the heritage of all Christendom. Only so, he thought, could the wholeness of the Christian faith be realized.

*By courtesy of the World Council
of Churches*



CHARLES H. BRENT

With the effective assistance of a lawyer, Robert H. Gardiner, who was captured by Brent's vision, he set out to win the support of other Churches in America, and deputations visited Churches throughout Europe. It was in preparation for the proposed conference that the first meeting was held in April, 1914, between representatives appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and representatives of the English Free Churches. The 'Appeal to All Christian People' of Lambeth, 1920, had its roots in those meetings and their two reports of 1916 and 1918. From the Appeal arose the formal conversations begun in 1920 and carried on until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

Eventually in 1927 at Lausanne the first World Conference on Faith and Order met. Nearly all the major non-Roman communions, including the Orthodox, sent official representatives, four hundred in all, chosen from among their ablest theologians. Brent was rightly and inevitably made chairman. The Conference discussed frankly the theological agreements and disagreements of the Churches and much was done to remove misunderstanding. Its work was carried on by a

By courtesy of the World Council of Churches



NATHAN SÖDERBLOM

Continuation Committee which promoted further study of the issues and arranged a second world conference in Edinburgh, 1937, at which 123 Churches were represented by 504 persons. '1937' showed a noteworthy advance on '1927' in many respects. Much study and discussion had taken place in the interval, and when the conference assembled the delegates breathed a different atmosphere. Churches seemed no longer on the defensive, but now showed more mutual respect and a greater readiness to learn as well as to give. Faith and Order has indeed made a great contribution to the completely new spirit to be found between the Churches today. If on closer examination certain differences seem to have been sharpened, it is no less true that a very large area of common agreement has been discovered, as every successive conference gratefully recognizes. The debate continues.

It is not the business of Faith and Order to promote schemes of re-union, which must remain the province of the Churches. Much has happened in that realm also since 1910, and Edinburgh has had its share in easing the way. This booklet cannot even summarize developments, but we may recall that the United Church of Canada brought together Congregationalists, Methodists, and many Presbyterians in 1925; that in October, 1929, the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church again became one; 1931 saw the creation of one Methodist Church in this country out of Wesleyan, Primitive and United Methodists. Several acts of union have taken place in the United States, including, perhaps most notably, the formation there also of a union of Methodist Churches. There has been the outstanding achievement of the Church of South India, the first to bring together episcopal and non-episcopal Churches. Many important proposals in different lands are under serious discussion.



If Ye Love Me . . . : Life and Work

THERE is a long history of Christian co-operation in grappling in the name of Christ with social evils. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to go no further back, many Christian reformers—Wilberforce, Shaftesbury and Florence Nightingale were but a few—took the lead in this country in calling their fellows

to action. The official co-operation of the Churches in this field can be traced at least to the formation of the Interdenominational Conference of Social Service Unions in 1912, which did much to promote the study and application of Christian ethics. Similar work was done in America by the Federal Council of Churches.

The Conference of Social Service Unions initiated the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship, familiarly known as Copec, which met in Birmingham in 1924. Its methods were deliberately based upon Edinburgh. A series of commissions produced reports to be the basis of its work, and many men and women of eminence in the life of the nation co-operated. In its own sphere this, too, was a most creative gathering and many subsequent reforms and developments can be traced to its influence. For present purposes it must be enough to say that it prepared for, and indeed made possible, the conference at Stockholm in the following year, with which Archbishop Söderblom was closely associated.

At this conference on the Christian message to the social life of mankind, five hundred representatives from thirty-seven nations created the Life and Work movement, out of which came the more important conference at Oxford in 1937 on Church, Community and State, in which J. H. Oldham again gave outstanding leadership. It faced the challenge of secularism expressed in nationalism, Fascism and Communism, and other more subtle tendencies in industrial and cultural life. Events in Russia, Italy and Germany gave urgency to the debates of the conference and its literature and pronouncements were widely influential.



Coming Together : The World Council of Churches

THE Oxford conference was deliberately called in the same summer and the same land as the Faith and Order conference at Edinburgh, partly in order to facilitate the attendance at both of many delegates from other countries. But there were deeper implications. Not only were the two bodies making demands upon the services of the same people, it was becoming increasingly clear that the two belonged essentially together. No Christian who took his religion seriously could be indifferent to what either stood for. Faith and Order could not ignore the world in which the Churches worked and in which Christian doctrine had to be preached and lived. Life and Work found itself driven back on the theological issues thought to be the prerogative of Faith and Order; it was impossible to separate Christian ethics from Christian doctrine. So before either conference met in 1937 a group representing both movements had met to discuss the situation. From this came a proposal to



WILLIAM TEMPLE

unite in a World Council of Churches, and a resolution to this effect was prepared for presentation to both conferences.

With only three dissentients both Oxford and Edinburgh carried the resolution and created a committee of fourteen, seven from each. At Utrecht in 1938, under the chairmanship of William Temple, then Archbishop of York, a constitution was drafted for submission to the Churches, and a Provisional Committee was appointed to act for the 'World Council of Churches in process of formation'.

But in the following year came the Second World War.

The Churches stood the strain better than in the 1914-18 war, and the spiritual unity of Christians was not broken as it had been then. It even proved possible in various ingenious and sometimes heroic ways to keep contact across the line of battle. The brave witness of Christians in Germany and the occupied countries added a glorious page to the history of the Church. And all the while the Provisional Committee was in full activity. There was a ministry to prisoners of war on both sides. A department of Reconstruction and Inter-Church Aid undertook work for refugees, just as in Britain 'Christian Reconstruction in Europe' was created to be ready to give help to the shattered churches as soon as hostilities ceased. In 1948 the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs was set up, jointly with the I.M.C., for study and action in international and inter-racial questions, religious liberty, and liaison with the United Nations.

So there was already something in being even before the World Council of Churches was strictly speaking in existence at all! The first Assembly at Amsterdam in 1948 saw it formally constituted.

There were present 351 delegates and 238 alternates representing 147 Churches in forty-four countries. It was a thrilling and historic occasion. All races were represented and both sides of the iron curtain. The Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church were not participating. Nevertheless it was deeply moving to look at that company, drawn from east and west and north and south, from Churches that went back through the Christian ages and from Churches born only yesterday. Amsterdam was the most representative gathering of Christians ever held, and perhaps the most significant.

There was a youth delegation of one hundred. The part played by youth in bringing it all about was hinted at earlier in speaking of the S.C.M. which, be it remembered, was in many countries the Student Department of the Y.M.C.A. or the Y.W.C.A.; much is owed to those two great pioneer movements. The Christian task in the world has captured the imagination of many young men and women. On the very eve of the war, in August 1939, fifteen hundred young people from seventy countries, most of them under twenty-six years of age, met in Amsterdam. That was a realistic generation and they had few illusions as to the kind of world



THE ASSEMBLY HALLS,
EDINBURGH

in which they were living, but the motto of their conference was *Christus Victor*. In the armed forces, in prison camps, in underground resistance movements, in caring for the refugees, in trying to protect the hunted Jews, in refusing to make the message and rules of their youth organizations conform to Nazi standards—in these and a host of other ways the delegates at Amsterdam and their colleagues were shortly to show their faith and courage. And the youth section of the ecumenical movement has continued to show faith and vigour and enterprise, and gives rich promise of a succession to lead the Church forward, no doubt along new paths, in the service of Christ.

It is not possible to follow the story of the W.C.C. in detail since. The Second Assembly has been held at Evanston, near Chicago. The third at New Delhi is on the drawing boards. Other conferences have been held. More important, the work of the various departments and of the national councils in many lands, in which the Churches join to carry forward the purposes for which the W.C.C. exists, has persisted all the while. A similar process brought about the fusion in 1942 in the British Council of Churches of several once independent streams of Christian co-operation. There are sixteen somewhat similar national councils 'associated' with the W.C.C., though its constituent members are the Churches themselves. The W.C.C. is a continuing organ to act for the Churches day in and day out in a host of ways, and certainly not only in the calling of conferences. Today the Council includes 171 member Churches in fifty-three nations.



Integration?

THE latest significant development of all that began at Edinburgh is the plan for the integration of the I.M.C. and the W.C.C. While differing in the nature of their membership they have been 'in association' from the start, both in title and in fact. Close working relations have been maintained through a permanent joint committee and a number of joint activities. The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, referred to above, belongs to both. The East Asia Christian Conference looks to both. The Division of Studies is joint. Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service is the channel for Christian help everywhere. Step by step the pressure of facts has been bringing them closer together, so that they have become, as it has been put, not parallel but converging bodies. Most of the missionary societies related to the I.M.C. are connected with Churches in membership with the W.C.C., and the national Christian councils which are members of the I.M.C. are also increasingly becoming associated with the W.C.C.

Deeper reasons than those of convenient administration point in the same direction. If Christian Churches are to be true to their calling as Churches, they must carry the Gospel into all the world and they must strive to achieve the unity of all those for whom Jesus Christ is Lord. Mission and unity both belong to the Church's calling. A plan of integration has been before both bodies and their member Churches and societies, and seems on the verge of final endorsement.



The Meaning for Us

we have been looking again at a great story which ought to be cause for great thanksgiving. Yet it has surely also brought home to us the humiliating contrast between the Church as it is in the purpose of God and the Churches as they are today.

At his enthronement in Canterbury in the midst of the war, William Temple spoke these well-known words: 'As though in preparation for such a time as this, God has been building up a Christian fellowship which now extends into almost every nation, and binds citizens of them all together in true unity and mutual love. No human agency planned this . . . Almost incidentally the great world-fellowship has arisen; it is the great new fact of our era.' The I.M.C. and the W.C.C., in formation and in being, indeed helped immeasurably in war and its aftermath. But we are faced by a no less serious situation today. The future of mankind depends upon the way men handle the emergence of Africa and the East into conscious independent power. Until we have achieved world disarmament the threat of near extinction hangs over us with its grim mushroom cloud. And there is widespread secularism and paganism in West and East alike. To very many of our fellows the Churches seem an irrelevant survival from a bygone age. That politicians and sociologists are as puzzled and baffled as churchmen does not help. If we are honest, we Christians must confess our failure to carry the good news of Christ to the whole world, our ineffectiveness in bringing that Gospel to bear upon social and international life, and the weakness caused by our divisions.

But the Gospel is not only for every man, it is for all of every man; for man as husband, worker, citizen, as well as churchman. Not only geographically but in depth, if one may so put it, we have to preach to every creature.

The ecumenical movement—Edinburgh and all its outcome—brings encouragement because its fruits already reveal it as manifestly the work of God. To interpret the movement as inspired only by a desire for greater efficiency of organization, a greater tidiness, is sadly to undervalue its significance. It rests on deep foundations in the Christian Faith.

From one standpoint Edinburgh, and what has come out of it, can be seen as a growth in understanding the fullness of our Faith. It has shown the inevitable coming together of movements started in separation. Neither the I.M.C., nor Faith and Order, nor Life and Work, nor the W.C.C., can ultimately be isolated and self-contained. All Churches and all Christian disciples can learn from this experience of the inter-relation of doctrine and life. The ecumenical movement teaches us the necessity of holding together elements in the full Christian message that we have too often separated.

At the same time, Edinburgh and its outcome has seen the realization and expression of a unity in Christ that is more fundamental than all our differences. That was what delegates to Edinburgh discovered, many of them to their great surprise, the first time such a varied group came together for close consultation. And that experience has been repeated in all subsequent gatherings and co-operative

work. We who have been there have entered into a unity transcending all our differences of race, nationality, and Church tradition. It is not a unity we create by coming together; it is a unity given by God. The Churches belong together in the Church. What that may mean for our ecclesiastical groupings we do not know. We have not discovered the kind of outward manifestation which God wills that we shall give to that inner unity. But we must seek for it.

One of the greatest documents of the ecumenical movement is the 'Affirmation of Unity' adopted by the Edinburgh Faith and Order Conference of 1937, which included Christians of the most diverse traditions, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, Orthodox, Baptist and others. It sets out so admirably the meaning of the whole movement that it is quoted in full below.



Together Where We Live

WE have been talking about world conferences and about great problems on a national or world scale. But as the Message of the First Assembly of the W.C.C. said: 'Our coming together to form a World Council will be in vain unless Christians and Christian congregations everywhere commit themselves afresh to the Lord of the Church in a new effort to seek together, where they live, to be His witnesses and servants among their neighbours.'

Where we live, among our neighbours, that is the front line. The ecumenical movement might encourage unhealthy day dreams. If it is to be real and healthy, it must be incarnated in the life of worship and work of local congregations in town and village. The responsibility of membership in the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church must in practice be carried out by faithful service of a denomination and in a parish or congregation and in the local councils of churches. It is no mark of Christian insight to be scornful of the chores of the local church.

What began at Edinburgh must go on in us and through us.

Affirmation of Union in Allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ,

adopted by the Second World Conference on Faith and Order, Edinburgh, 1937.

'We are one in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God. We are one in allegiance to Him as Head of the Church and as King of kings and Lord of lords. We are one in acknowledging that this allegiance takes precedence of any other allegiance that may make claims upon us.

'This unity does not consist in the agreement of our minds or the consent of our wills. It is founded in Jesus Christ Himself, Who lived, died and rose again to bring us to the Father, and Who through the Holy Spirit dwells in His Church. We are one because we are all the objects of the love and grace of God, and are called by Him to witness in all the world to His glorious gospel.

' Our unity is of heart and spirit. We are divided in the outward forms of our life in Christ, because we understand differently His will for His Church. We believe, however, that a deeper understanding will lead us towards a united apprehension of the truth as it is in Jesus.

' We humbly acknowledge that our divisions are contrary to the will of Christ, and we pray God in His mercy to shorten the days of our separation and to guide us by His Spirit into fulness of unity.

' We are thankful that during recent years we have been drawn together; prejudices have been overcome, misunderstandings removed, and real, if limited, progress has been made towards our goal of a common mind.

' In this Conference we may gratefully claim that the Spirit of God has made us willing to learn from one another, and has given us a fuller vision of the truth and enriched our spiritual experience.

' We have lifted up our hearts together in prayer; we have sung the same hymns; together we have read the same Holy Scriptures. We recognise in one another, across the barriers of our separation, a common Christian outlook and a common standard of values. We are therefore assured of a unity deeper than our divisions.

' We are convinced that our unity of spirit and aim must be embodied in a way that will make it manifest to the world, though we do not yet clearly see what outward form it should take.

' We believe that every sincere attempt to co-operate in the concerns of the kingdom of God draws the severed communions together in increased mutual understanding and goodwill. We call upon our fellow-Christians of all communions to practise such co-operation; to consider patiently occasions of disunion that they may be overcome; to be ready to learn from those who differ from them; to seek to remove those obstacles to the furtherance of the gospel in the non-Christian world which arise from our divisions; and constantly to pray for that unity which we believe to be our Lord's will for His Church.

' We desire also to declare to all men everywhere our assurance that Christ is the one hope of unity for the world in face of the distractions and dissensions of this present time. We know that our witness is weakened by our divisions. Yet we are one in Christ and in the fellowship of His Spirit. We pray that everywhere, in a world divided and perplexed, men may turn to Jesus Christ our Lord, Who makes us one in spite of our divisions; that He may bind in one those who by many worldly claims are set at variance; and that the world may at last find peace and unity in Him; to Whom be glory for ever.'

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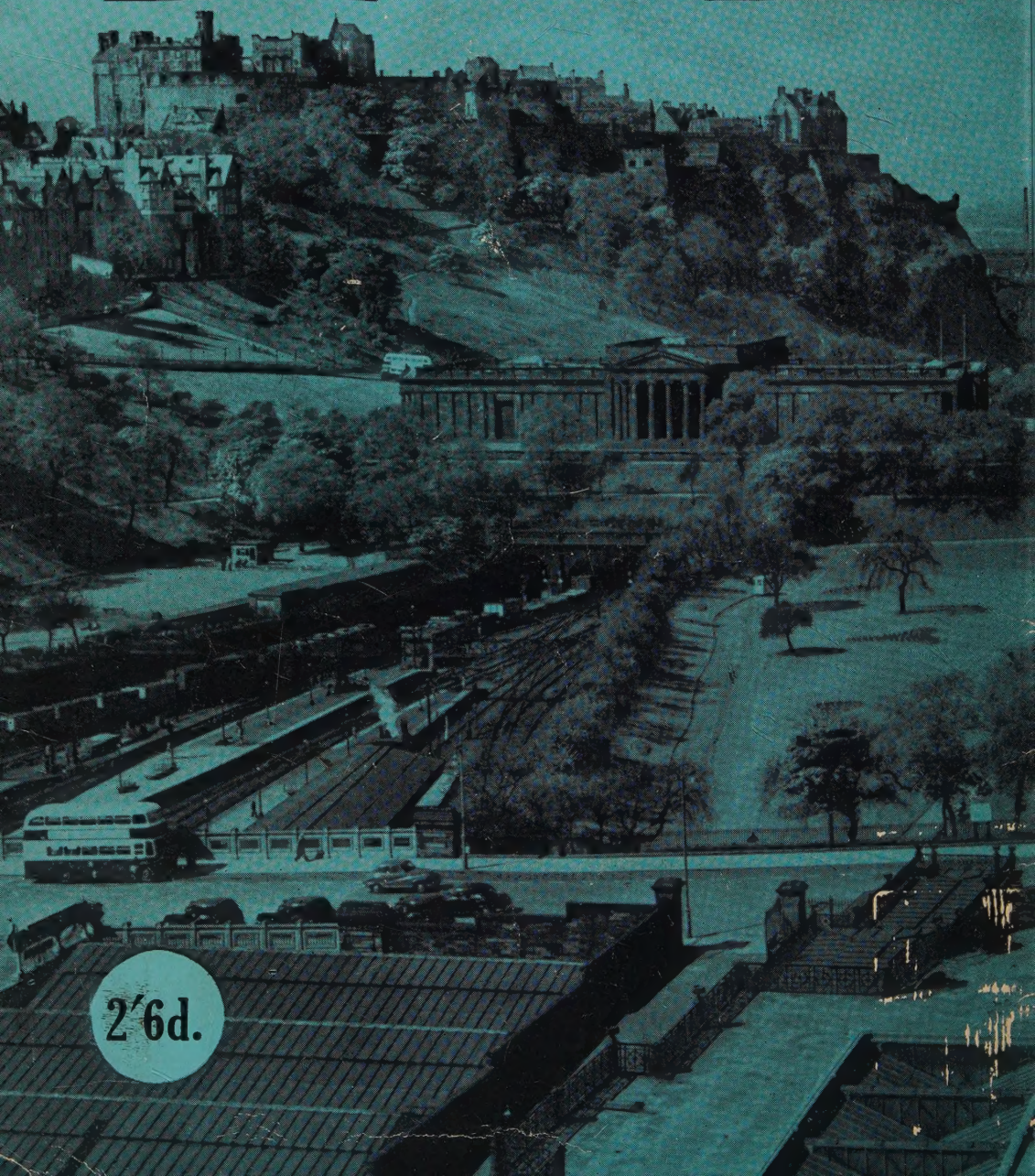
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